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10
J. S. Rodson
from,

C. J. Tennant & Dwyer

Christmas
1865

[Complete list of
Jacob H. Rodson
and family members]



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THE
QUADRILATERAL.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE

THE
QUADRILATERAL.

Some said, 'John, print it!'
Others said, 'Not so!'
Some said, 'It may do good.'
Others said, 'No!'

BUNYAN'S *Apology for the*
Pilgrim's Progress.



LONDON:
SAUNDERS, OTLEY, AND CO.
66 BROOK STREET, W.
1865.

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PR.
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TO
CARLETON MORGAN CRAWFORD, ESQ.

THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY AND RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED
BY HIS FRIENDS

THE AUTHORS.

824673

DEAR CRAWFORD,

You have often good-humouredly reproached us with having never thought it worth while to address to you any of those verses which, as you complain, we make the vehicles of all our emotions and all our experience, except our friendship for you. To this charge we have always replied, that our love for you and yours for us did not need such expression as rhyme could give, and that in any case we had too little power over our own pens to be able to sit down and write an ode or a sonnet as one might sit down and draw a cheque. In this you must accuse our weakness, not our affection, 'our poverty and not our will consents.' But what we could do we have done ; we could not write

you a poem, but we could dedicate, as at this time, these our versicles to you, and pray you to accept of them as the gift of us three to you, the fourth angle of our Quadrilateral. Each of us may say of you—

Hic mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet;—

and each of us will feel an additional pleasure in success, and an additional pang in failure, from the fact that the first page of our work is inscribed with your name. Whether we succeed or fail, you will treasure this book for the sake of its authors,

Your very affectionate friends,

C. M.

J. H. G.

M. R.

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An ill-favoured thing, but mine own.

As you like it.




DENMARK'S WELCOME.

(September 1864.)



OF late, I sleeping lightly, dreamed a dream.
Methought I was upon a barren coast ;
Low sandhills hemmed me in, on every side
Save westward, where the much resounding sea
Came roaring, driven by the autumn gale,
And broke in white foam on the dreary land.
Upon the shore a queenly presence stood,
She seemed the guardian genius of the soil ;
Alone she stood, and wept beside the sea.
And looking o'er the billows, I beheld
Where a fair ship that ploughed the stormy waves
Bore England's royal banner on her mast ;
And on the deck she carried England's hope,
And a fair lady was beside him there.
Her the lone weeper on the shore beheld,



And cried to her in sorrow's native tone,
And half in anger spake such words as these :

‘ Hear me, daughter of a king,
Hear me o’er the roaring sea ;
Though no triumph song I sing,
Listen, lady, unto me.

Hear me through the wild commotion
Of the winds so fierce and high,
Through the thunder voice of Ocean
And the tumult of the sky.

By the Danish blood that glows
In thy fair and ‘ damask cheek ;’
By the love a daughter owes,
Hear me, daughter, as I speak.

When thou wentest but a maiden
From my yet uninjured shore,
Then my fields were all unladen
With the brave—who are no more.

Then did cheers and blessings greet thee,
Roses carpeted thy ways ;
Not with roses now we meet thee,
Fallen upon evil days.

Every blossom has been shed
On a Danish soldier's grave.
Well they struggled—they are dead —
Dead, for there was none to save !

None was found to aid the right,
None was found to quell the wrong,
None to curb the tyrant's might —
We were weak and he was strong.

Russia left us to our fate ;
France deserted us ; but we
Hoped for succour, though 'twas late,
From the Island of the Free !

From the land that struck the fetters
From the ankles of the slave ;
And there came—a dotard's letters,
And the words were very brave !

Yet I welcome thee, my daughter ;
Fear not—Denmark loves thee still ;
Thou, too, weepest for the slaughter
Of my sons on Düppel Hill.

Daughter, thee I do not blame ;
Blessings still I call on thee ;
Yet I cannot but cry shame
On the Island of the Free !

By the promises—their own,
All unasked, unsought by me—
That “ I should not stand alone,”
Shame upon the craven Free !

By the freedom, dear to all,
Common both to her and me,
Doubly, trebly, shame I call
On the Island of the Free !

By the blood to God that calls,
Blood of heroes, shed for me !
By each Danish tear that falls,
Shame upon the craven Free !

Lastly, by the ring of gold
That thy husband gave to thee,
Shame upon the wordy bold!
Shame upon the craven Free!’

She ceased her plaint, and then there came a mist.
Cold as the breath of winter, from the west,
And spreading first across the moaning waves
It hid the fair ship in a depth of gloom,
And landward next it fell, a murky screen.
And floating darkly o’er the lonely beach,
It robed her weeping, in its darksome folds,
With her sad eyes and her upbraiding words.
Me last it circled in an orb of night,
And waking so, I found it was a dream.

A FAIR LADY.

HER eyes were blue as Southern sky,
 As purely, calmly bright were they
 As is the first young morn of May
 Before the sun is high.
 Her locks in many a ringlet fell ;
 Vainly might poet hope to tell
 Each glossy curl, each cluster winding,
 As if by Nature meant for binding
 The hearts her lustrous eyes might lure,
 And keeping them as captives sure.
 Her face resembled such a saint
 As men of eld were wont to paint,
 The mirror of a gentle soul ;
 When circled round by many a shoal
 In life's inhospitable sea,
 May such a heaven-lit beacon light
 Dispel temptation's darksome night,
 And kindly guidance bring to me !

TO ———.



MY friend! a tenderer or dearer name
 In love's vocabulary none can find—
 I speak to you in verse for very shame,
 Because in prose I cannot speak my mind.
 I pray you to my versicles be kind!
 I own I have no subtlety of speech,
 And had I, poesy is like the wind
 That plays in aspens, whispers in the beech,
 But how it comes, or whence, no mortal wight may
 teach.

So should your skilful eye detect a flaw
 In these poor rhymes of mine, why, count it nought.
 I write not to fulfil poetic law,
 But for that rhyme can best express my thought,
 In a heart-melody by rules untaught;
 Heart-melody, which unto you may be

Far sweeter than a strain right deftly wrought
By some old master of high minstrelsy
Who hath embalmed a verse in notes that cannot die.

And hearing lately of your new-born woe,
I wished to comfort you as best I might,
As, were I near when illness brought you low
And Death hung over you with brow of night,
I should sit by to see you nursed aright,
And watch you, praying God to give you life,
And gladden as your eye resumed its light,
And hail you when a victor from the strife
You rose, and vanquished Death resheathed his baffled
knife.

Yet now perchance your need of me is more,
For you could face Death with an equal soul,
Expecting welcome on the blessed shore
And knowing that your spirit neared its goal.
Now is your bark aground upon a shoal,
Now from your heaven vanishes the sun,
And now around you spirit-thunders roll ;
Now is life's winter far too soon begun,
And all her harvest hope is ruined and undone !

Ah! let me raise a hand (alas, too weak !)
To aid your bark back to the open sea ;
Let me some words of truthful solace speak,
And tell the promise of the months to be !
I think you will not turn in wrath from me.
This is but summer lightning in the sky,
Your yellow sheaves shall yet be housed with glee,
Your sun shall burst in splendour from on high ;
And though your June be wet, your August shall be dry.

‘ You rave to me of tempest and of rain ! ’
Methinks I hear you, half in anger, say,
‘ Your metaphor and simile are vain,
You sit and string your rhymes, and, well-a-day,
You think yourself a poet ! ’tis your way !
You soothe an aching heart with silly rhyme,
And with your idle talking you would stay
An anguish that will last me out my time
Until this mortal clay is couched in kindred slime.’

Alas! my brother, you are stricken sore !
Forgive me, if I seemed to play with grief ;
But yet I would not have you shut the door
Against my prattle, which may bring relief,

I'd have you lend an ear to me, in brief ;
I too have suffered, not indeed as you ;
I trust my heartstrings to no pretty thief ;
Yet am I not amidst the happy few
Who never felt the chill of sorrow's deadly dew.

Time was I knew a man, alas ! how fair,
How excellent he seemèd ! in his eyes
His spirit shone, and o'er his golden hair
A glow from heaven seemed to sink and rise.
He was too pure for earth, and so the skies
In envy caught him from our loving sight ;
And when I think of him, the laughter dies
From out my life, and I am left in night :
God grant we two may meet before the throne of white !

Never to part again, but evermore
To fling our crowns before the great Man-God !
Hope whispers this, but crowds around me roar,
And he lies sleeping 'neath the churchyard sod,
And all my paths in mourning still are trod :
God rest him safely till the trumpet sound !
And so you see I try to kiss the rod,
And I can laugh still when the jest goes round,
Yet in a silent stream bleeds that unstaunched wound.

And thus I am not ignorant of woe,
I think my bruise was scarcely less than yours ;
Grief dies not, but her pangs less frequent grow,
And Time brings respite though he has no cures
For a cleft heart ; the ancient love endures,
And sobs above the tumult now and then,
And though the force of will its life immures
And keeps it prisoned, it escapes again
In audible lament to some—my brother men.

I hope your wound is not as deep as mine ;
You blame her not, and that indeed is well.
You are a poet ; harmony divine
Floats like the music of a distant bell
Through all your utterance ; then ring the knell
Of murdered Love in muffled tones but sweet,
And let its chiming to your spirit tell
A wordless tale where wrong and pardon meet,
And bury murdered Love in Pity's winding sheet !

Then rise and go, as childless David went
When that he heard Bathsheba's son was dead :
Quoth he, ' The time for weeping now is spent ;
Bring n e my robes ! I will anoint my head ! '

And so resignedly he broke the bread
He had not tasted for so many days.
O friend ! by us the lesson may be read ;
It lights us still in life's entangled ways,
For through the night of years it poureth blessed rays.

Rise up, my brother, gaze upon the sun !
I swear to you, by this our friendship true,
That your life's glory is not half begun
And there are many happy days for you !
The bee that in the morning sips the dew
From the young petals of a budding rose,
As day in blushing splendour blooms anew,
Sees brighter hours or e'er the evening close,
Yet nothing of the light of noonday's blue foreknows.

So shall it be with you ; you yet shall rise
On wings of poet vigour far on high,
And men shall watch you with astonished eyes
While through the earthborn mists of doubt you fly
And raise a blissful song of victory !
God comfort you ! that day will come, my friend !
God send that I may see it ere I die !
God aid you with His light as home you wend !
And with a smile of love, God crown you at the end !

THE LAST MEETING.

MOONBEAM lit the velvet pall
 That o'er his body lay,
 And sister moonbeams silvered all
 The darkness into day.

A moonbeam kissed his lips so white,
 And kissed his marble brow ;
 Ah ! never wore yon sleeping knight
 A smile so grand as now !

The moon, night's empress, all alone
 Beheld him from above,
 Remembered lost Endymion
 And melted into love.

She poured a glory o'er his face,
 And o'er his sleeping eyes ;
 The slumbrous splendours of the place
 She waked, and bade to rise.

They waking, seemed to move in light ;
The carvings quaint and fair,
They seemed to quiver in affright
As knowing Death was there.

A footstep through the silence steals
And falters up the nave,
That faithful wife no terror feels,
Her love has made her brave.

The glory of her golden hair
Is beaming to her waist,
The frenzied boldness of despair
Impels her in her haste.

No fear, no sorrow, no surprise
Is written in her mien ;
The tearless azure of her eyes
Is fearsome to be seen.

She comes, she stands beside his head,
She scarcely heaves a sigh :
' He is not dead ! he is not dead !'
How bitter is her cry !

'The snowy whiteness of her arms
Around his neck she wreathes,
Grief lends fresh beauty to her charms,
She half believes he breathes !

She doubts, she fears, she knows it all,
She sinks upon his breast,
Nor love, nor hatred e'er shall call
That lady from her rest !

TO MARY.



AND dost thou ask me, lady bright !

What most attracts a stranger's gaze,

What most awakens his delight,

What most deserves and wins his praise,

Of all the pleasant sights that grace

This spot, where one might truly deem

Nature had formed a dwelling place

To realize a poet's dream ?

Dost ask me whether Hartfell hill

That towers nakedly on high,

Or Garple's tree-embowered rill

With mirrored glimpses of the sky,

Merits the tenderer regret,

The warmer corner of the heart ;

Or if the whole refuse to let

Remembrance linger o'er a part ?

Fair is the view from Hartfell height,
And Garple's glen is fair to see ;
Soft was the heather's purple light
When last I wandered there with thee.

Sweet was the music of the burn,
As seaward laughingly it sped ;
New beauties glowed at every turn,
And Time on eagle pinion fled.

Yet hill and stream and verdant dale
Shall pass beyond fond memory's ken ;
O'er these Oblivion spreads her veil,
And will but raise it now and then.

The very laughter of the brook
Shall lose in time its silver sound ;
And vainly, vainly shall we look
For forms that fade, and are not found.

But one fair form shall never fade,
Ah ! never from these eyes of mine ;
No time shall robe it in the shade,
Nor taer it roughly from its shrine.

One voice most musical and sweet
Shall fall upon my listening ear,
And, though it be but fancy's cheat,
That one delusion shall be dear.

Mary ! that voice belongs to thee,
Mary ! that radiant form is thine.
Nor art thou, love, less dear to me
Because thou never canst be mine.

TO ———.



H ! brother poet, happy brother poet !

Arise and wake a gladness in the land

Born of the gladness vocal in your song.

Sing morning blushing over eastern waves,

God's beauty in the golden afternoon,

The dewy silence of the purple eve

And the strange voiceless music of the stars,

Bear living witness to the living truth

And tell your brothers how divine they are.

So shall you wear on earth the thorn of hate

And elsewhere the perfect rose of love ;

So shall you live a human poet here

And wear the crown God wreathes for poets there !

PARAPHRASE FROM HORACE.

BOOK III. ODE 3.



THE man who firm to his resolve doth stay,
 Nor brawling mob, nor tyrants' frown shall
 sway

In his intent ; nor Auster when he raves,
 The stormy chief of Hadria's restless waves ;
 Nor the strong arm of Jove that rules on high,
 Hurling his thunders through the flaming sky.
 Were heaven on earth in ruin fell to rush,
 A life—but not a soul, the fall would crush.

A VALENTINE.

MAIDEN ! whose eyes of blue,
 Of heaven's own native hue,
 Beam with as soft a light
 As the chaste queen of night,
 Propitious hear !
 While distant from thee far,
 My spirit's polar star,
 To thine own Highland shore,
 A suppliant, I pour
 A lover's prayer.

All lonely here I pine,
 Nor poesy divine,
 Nor the inspired page
 Of many an ancient sage
 My heart can wean
 From musing on thy charms,
 Thy face, thy snowy arms,

Thy form as light and airy
As if thou wert a fairy,
Or Mab the queen.

They say in days of yore
Sweet Venus, now no more
Worshipped on earth, possessed
A zone which round her waist
The goddess wore ;
And when its clasp she bound
Her radiant self around,
Whoever saw her then,
Or gods or mortal men,
Did straight adore.

Methinks upon the morn
When thou, sweet girl, wert born,
Dear torture of thy race,
With smiling winsome face,
That Venus flew
Down to the realms of earth,
And, guardian of thy birth,
She gave that wondrous zone
Henceforth to thee alone,
Thine own just due !

As thou art fair be kind ;
The galling chains unbind
Thou didst so deftly weave,
And mercifully leave
 My poor heart free ;
Or prithee grant me this
Longed for and precious bliss,
Breathe softly ‘ I am thine ! ’
So sweet Saint Valentine
 Thy guardian be !

SONNETS.

I



SWEETHEART, you ask me 'Can you educate
 Me to yourself; I cannot understand
 Your grandeur, though I know you good and
 great,
 For me—I am the lowest in the land!'
 This is my answer, Love shall teach you, dear,
 My spirit's stature, be it great or small;
 Learn then of love, love on and have no fear,
 For love shall overbridge the interval.
 But if between us interval there be,
 'Tis I that am the lower, I must rise;
 Oh! my heart's mistress, you must teach to me
 The inarticulate wisdom of your eyes!
 Whatever gulf your timid doubt may paint,
 I am your worshipper and you my saint!

II

Teach me, oh! teach me, darling, evermore,
For I have learnt and I must learn of you ;
Teach me, dear love, love's uninstructed lore,
And with your own truth make your lover true.
Those who have joined sweet music to deep thought
In art's most pure and holy matrimony
Are Samsons who at life's dear risk have bought
From lion's jaws the sweet wild heather honey ;
More blest than they, I saw your perfect face
True music's and true beauty's joint express ;
God gave to me to see your nameless grace
Which makes all other types of beauty less ;
So then from Him let weal or evil come,
You are embodied music, beauty's sum.

III

When that I gaze upon the evening sun
Sinking a purple splendour in the west ;
When that I listen to the waves that run
Through the green meadows that I love the best ;
When in the still solemnity of night
I seem to hear reposing Nature's breath ;

When in a rosy flush of morning light

 Nature awakens from her seeming death ;

When through deep lanes I take my gladsome way,

 Or when I climb the mountain's azure crest ;

When in a town's soul-wearing street I stray,

 Or 'midst God's hills and trees I take my rest—

Across all life I feel a longing come,

These are fair details, she—is beauty's sum.

MY LOVE.

N my verse shall Annie dwell,
 Though I know I love full well,
 Lives there any that can tell ?

Love me, sweet ! for you I love
 Though my faith I cannot prove ;
 One knows that—whose name is Love.

All my rhyming is of love,
 And the poor word rhymes to ‘dove,’
 Yet a man’s heart it may move.

Oh ! my tongue and pen are weak ;
 Passion lives but cannot speak ;
 Love, I hope, has made me meek.

If I cannot paint you, dear,
So that all shall see you here,
Poet I am none, I fear !

Yet, alas ! I cannot make
Language sentient for your sake ;
At their worth my verses take.

And you love me by your sighs,
And across your violet eyes
I can see the dim tears rise.

Death explains the doubt of life,
' Death cuts love with cruel knife !
Sweetheart, love is endless life !

' Life is mortal,' so you say,
Whereunto I answer, nay,
True life shall endure for aye.

Bread upon the waves we cast ;
Life is here, 'twill soon be past ;
Death shall join us at the last.

I can see the flowers to-day,
Looking in your eyes I say,
Love! it is the month of May.

Winter comes with snow and sorrow;
And a comfort still I borrow,
Love! it will be spring to-morrow!

A LIE.

ISSUE from lips that are valiant for truth,
 I come from a soul that is earnest and true ;
 I do my wild work without mercy or ruth,
 My speaker may garland his temples with rue !

The love that is fearless, the fear that is love,
 Are blighted or frozen on feeling my breath,
 In spirit a serpent, in presence a dove,
 They 'life-giver' call me the while I am death.

My father who sees me, applaudingly smiles,
 He calls me his darling so comely and mild,
 The youngest and best of his manifold wiles,
 A devil of hell with the eyes of a child !

The solace of Hope and the comfort of Faith
 Behind me in death-stricken panting are spread ;
 One smiles on my malice and suffers no scathe,
 I trust ere I die to see Charity dead !

Pictoribus atque poetis
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.
Scimus et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.

Ars Poetica.



DE PROFUNDIS.



UNDER a starless sky,
Without one ray to cheer the moonless night,
To Thee I cry,
Father, look down on me ; it will be light
If Thou art nigh.

Out on a barren waste !
The way is stony and the wind is bleak ;
Oh ! Lord, make haste ;
My feet are bleeding and my faith is weak.
Father ! make haste !

I cannot see Thy light,
The frowning tempest veils Thee from mine eye ;
My failing sight
Cannot discern the Star of Hope on high,
So dark the night.

All I have loved are gone,
Are gone before me to the blessed rest,
I, I alone,
While they lie cradled on Thy sheltering breast,
Still wander on.

May I not *now* come Home !
I fear the darkness and the stinging hail,
I cannot roam
Further without Thee or my strength will fail ;
Oh ! take me Home ! ,

ARIADNE.

HE dark-sailed ship crept silent from the bay,
While Ariadne, tender Ariadne,
Lay softly sleeping on the rugged shore
Where Theseus left her, dreaming happily
Of sunny Crete, and sunny maidenhood,
And him who once before her, like a god,
Stood in the palace of her mighty sire,
And thrilled her heart with the first look of love.
Waking, she sighed and opened her blue eyes,
Whispering, ' My Theseus, have I slumbered long ? '
And raised her head to see him ; he was there
When first the soft sleep stole upon her eyes,
Her head then rested on his iron arm,
He bade her slumber, he would watch the while,
And then he kissed her weary eyes to sleep ;
' Can aught have harmed him ? Theseus, art thou
near ?

And cast around her startled deer-like eyes
Down the steep shore, out on the barren sea,
Where now with conscious haste the dark-sailed
ship

Slunk round the narrow headland of the bay.
At first she gazed but did not understand,
Again she looked, bewildered, and the ship,
Rounding the cliff, was hidden from her sight.
Then with a choking sob, but tearless eye,
She turned and raved her sorrow to the rocks,
Making them echo to her lover's name,
And then sank down and swooned upon the strand,
Close where the tiny wavelets curled and fell,
And kissed her snowy feet, as pitying her,
And jewelled them with phosphorescent gleam.
And one by one the dark-robed sister Hours
Crept noiseless on beneath the crescent moon,
Till Hesperus grew pale and died outright,
Beneath the influence of the coming dawn,
And the chill morning air that woke the flowers
Touched Ariadne's cheek, who, shuddering, woke,
And sighed, ' 'T is but a dream ! Ah ! what a dream ! '
Then started up and cried most piteously,
' Where is the ship ? why am I here alone ?

Was I not dreaming when I saw them sail ?
Oh ! Theseus ! Theseus ! why am I betrayed ?
What have I done that I should lose thy love ?
What have I not done that could show thee
mine ?

Oh ! sea, oh ! rocks, hearken, and pity me !
Oh ! dimpled sea, smile not so mockingly,
But bear me back my Theseus, bear him back,
Or else for ever clasp him in thy arms,
Lest he should love some other and be hers !
Oh ! frowning cliffs, frown not, but pity me ;
As the young sunlight slants upon me now
So the first ray of love shot through my heart
When I beheld him towering in the hall,
And as that sunbeam gathers strength with day
So grew my love into a mid-day fire,
And then—fell night, cold, sudden, endless night !'
While thus she mourned, from out the wood-girt
shore

There came a strain of music, wild and low,
And a strange group, fantastic, ivy-crowned,
With graceful gesture poured their morning hymn :

ODE TO DIONYSUS.

‘Dionysus ! deign to hear us,
Greatest of the gods divine,
Fairy wreaths of mystic music
While for thee we twine.

All the woes of suffering mortals
Thou canst banish, god of wine !
Hear us then while we adore thee,
Giver of the vine !

See ! the rising sun is driving
All the mists and shadows dim ;
Dionysus ! God of gladness !
Hear our morning hymn !

Lo ! the burnished sea beneath us
Rippling in the early breeze ;
Hear the hum of waking nature
Through the dewy trees !

Lo ! I see the Paphian goddess
Floating through thy sacred groves,
Throned in car of pearly whiteness
Drawn by snowy doves.

Eros points an arrow at thee,
Points a barbed arrow. Twine,
Worshippers of Dionysus,
The myrtle with the vine !

Twine the vine-leaves for his temples
Myrtles for his golden hair !
Dionysus, ever youthful !
Hear our morning prayer !

They ceased, and saw upon the foam-washed shore
The damsel weeping, making still her moan ;
All gloriously the sun shone on her head,
And shed a rosy lustre on her neck,
And on her arms upraised as if in prayer.
Then sang again the ivy-crowned choir,
To soft low notes, a sleep-inspiring strain :

‘ Daughter of the morning sunlight
And the smiling restless sea,
To our consecrated island
What hath lurèd thee ?

Did the enamoured zephyr waft thee
From his caverns in the west,
Or did thy mother ocean bear thee
On her azure breast ?

Hush ! I see her eyelids closing
'Neath our sleep-compelling strain
Come then, Morpheus ! charm her sorrow,
Steal away her pain !

Hush ! the trembling tear is glistening,
Glistening 'neath the drooping lid,
See ! the parting lips discover
Pearly teeth half hid.

Softly tread the magic circle,
Softly till she cease to weep,
Gently and more gently whisper,
Whisper till she sleep !'

They paused, but all the echoes on the shore
Took up the dying note and sighed it back,

Till cliffs and woods seemed all to whisper 'Sleep !'
And when it died away the damsel slept.
And then they bore her, like a tired child,
In slow procession up the rugged shore,
And vanished slowly in the piny groves
That crowned with murky green the frowning cliffs.

THE BEGINNING AND THE END.

CHILD lay weeping, weeping,
 But it could not tell its sorrow,
 And after a night of sleeping
 It woke in smiles on the morrow.

A boy stood laughing and talking,
 With his cheek in an honest glow,
 Of the path of life he would walk in,
 Of a world he did not know.

A youth stood laughing, beguiléd
 By the smiles of his maiden dear,
 And he wrote some lines to her eyelid,
 And a sonnet to her ear.

A man sat graver and older,
 One of a happy three,
 With the second's head on his shoulder,
 And the third upon his knee.

A man much older and grayer
 Knelt by two graves with one stone,
And I thought as he breathed his prayer
 I could catch the word, ' Alone ! '

An old man lay waiting and weeping,
 And he knew not that ere the morrow
He should go to his rest, and, sleeping,
 Should wake no more to his sorrow.

-

FAUST'S NEW YEAR'S EVE.

ARK ! the bitter wind is keening
 Round the frozen mere,
 Requiems of ghastly meaning
 For the dying Year.

Now like fiends in chorus yelling,
 Now like distant death-bell knelling.

In an agony of strife
 Striving for the old year's life !

In an agony of fear
 Dying with the dying Year !

In an agony of woe
 Wrestling with the silent snow,
 Dying hard and dying slow.

In an agony of prayer
 Praying wildly, 'Spare, oh spare !'
 Rising now from plaintive sadness
 To a Banshee's scream of madness ;

Sinking now to low entreaty,
Whispering, whining, 'Pity. pity !
In an agony of crying,
For the Year who lies a-dying,
Dying, with his sins about him,
Thronging ghosts that haunt and flout him ;
All the sorrow he has brought,
All the ruin he has wrought,
Crowded on his dying thought !
Cries of drowning mariners
Ringing in his dying ears !
All the misery and sin
That have been since he came in,
Battles, murders, cursing, lying,
'Throng him as he lies a-dying !
Dying, panting, sinking fast
Into the abysmal Past !

* * * * *

The clock strikes twelve,
The hour has sped,
The wind has dropped,
The Year is dead.

A RESOLUTION.

WOULD not bid thee share my poverty,
Nor drag thee with me up the hill of toil,
I am resolved to climb it all alone,
Nor yet to ask thy love nor tell thee mine.
Although I know not whether, at the end,
The love I labour for shall crown my toil,
Or if, like desert traveller faint with thirst,
Who sees far off a glimmering line of green
And feathery shade that may o'erhang a well,
And, staggering on with fatal haste, falls down
Just where the desert and oasis meet,
Close by the very margin of the brook,
And hears with dying ears the whispering shade
That screens the dripping fountain from the sun,
But wastes the scanty remnant of his life
In feeble crawling and intense desire.
Or like that wretched monk of old, who swore

Nor food nor drink should pass his starving lips
Till he should have transcribed the Holy Book,
Reached the last page and perished in his cell,
Half saint, half suicide ; I know not now
Whether, like these, there sit awaiting me
Failure and disappointment at the end,
I only know my purpose is unchanged.

*TEMPORA MUTANTUR, NOS ET
MUTAMUR IN ILLIS.*



ONCE believed those simple folk
Who hold love a reality,
And marriage not a social yoke
Of mere conventionality.

I thought the light of maidens' eyes,
Their smiles and all the rest,
Were *not* mere baits to catch rich flies
And landed interest.

I once believed, (which only shows
My most refreshing greenness,)
That breaking faith and breaking vows
Came little short of meanness.

I once believed that matrimony
Was linking hearts and fates,
And *not* transferring sums of money
And joining large estates.

I once imagined (in my youth)
That not to keep a carriage
Was no impediment, forsooth !
To any happy marriage.

I also fancied, (but I own
My verdure *was* delicious,)
That trampling young affections down
Was positively vicious ?

I did not think the Greeks were right,
(Before I worshipped Mammon,)
Who in declining ' marriage ' write
The accusative case, γάμον.

These past ideas agree but ill
With our enlightened present ;
The lesson must be learnt, but still
The learning was not pleasant.

Good qualities girls don't expect,
Or bodily or mental,
(You seldom find *much* intellect
Go with a princely rental !)

True love is an exploded thing
Fit only for romances ;
Who ever heard of marrying
A man without finances !

In short, I disbelieve them all,
Those doctrines fundamental
I learnt when I was *very* small !
And *very* sentimental !

SONNET.



S on the bosom of a westward cloud
 A lingering flush of violet light reposes,
 Long after the dead sun his head has bowed,
 And eve has strewed his cloudy pall with roses ;
 So thy last tender glance when we did part
 Still plays in lingering twilight round my heart.

As in a little dell, shut in by hills,
 A strain of music lingers loth to die,
 And every slumbering echo wakes, and fills
 Each nook, each stream, each flower, with melody ;
 So doth thy soft ' Farewell, for we must part,'
 Thrill every nerve, and tremble in my heart.

But as the waning eve, with all its sadness
 Betrays a crimson promise of the morrow,
 So do the memories of departed gladness
 Speak of a joy that shall succeed to sorrow ;
 And in some hidden corner of my breast,
 There is a hope of meeting, and of rest !

BEATI MISERICORDES.

HER head upon her hand reclined,
 Her sobs are tearless as the wind
 That sobs around the casement,
 The frosty winter moon has shed
 Soft light upon the golden head
 Bowed down in self-abasement.

A light that like a silver crown
 Seems but to mock the weary frown
 That on the pale brow lingers ;
 With icicles instead of leaves
 The trees are bending, from the eaves
 Are pointing icy fingers.

Oh ! head too fair to be bowed down !
 Oh ! brow too white to wear that frown !
 Oh ! heart too young for breaking !

Alas! to see such ghastly light
In eyes that should be purely bright
With peace of their own making!

‘This frozen heart will never weep,
These burning eyes will never sleep!
Forsaken, not forsaking!
The only sleep for eyes that shine
With the unearthly light of mine
Is sleep that has no waking!’

There is a footstep at the door,
A shadow falls across the floor,
A figure stands beside her;
There comes at last, unseen, unheeded,
The blessed comfort sorely needed,
But oh, so long denied her!

Unseen, for in her fevered eyes
That look of piteous surprise
Still lingers, ever lingers;
Unheeded, for the silver crown
Still plays around the head bowed down
Upon the tight-clenched fingers.

‘ He should have killed me ere he fled,
And not have left me worse than dead,
I could have blessed him dying !
But to live on with tainted name,
And bear the sneer, and hear the shame
That busy tongues are crying !

‘ The very moon, as wearying
Of shining on so vile a thing,
Veils her cold purity !
There is no light for such as I !
No God ! no mercy ! and I die
For lack of sympathy !’

A voice beside her whispers, ‘ Nay !
It is for those who go astray
That mercy doth abound.’
‘ Who answers thus my inmost thought ?
Who brings advice unasked, unsought ?’
She falters, starting round.

A lady, clad in holy weeds,
Whose gentle look speaks gentle deeds,
Is sadly o’er her leaning ;

Two soft brown eyes are on her bent,
Eyes beautiful and innocent,
But full of deepest meaning ;

Eyes which betrayed, amid the light
Of faith celestially bright,
The woman's heart within her ;
Eyes which no words of mine can paint,
They seemed too human for a saint,
Too heavenly for a sinner.

‘ I come, as loving not despising,
Not chiding you but sympathising,
For who am I to chide you ?
Oh ! sister, let me call you sister ! ’
(And tenderly she stooped and kissed her)
‘ Oh ! let me stay beside you ! ’

‘ You say you do not come to chide me,
You ask but to remain beside me,
I thank you, but I dare not !
Or if I did, you only seek
To vaunt your strength beside the weak,
You care not, oh, you care not !

‘ Your very presence mocks my sin,
And shows me what I might have been !

 Your whiteness blackens me,
My eyes are dazzled by your light,
Leave me ! I cannot bear the sight
 Of so much purity !’

And then all suddenly she cried,
‘ Oh ! leave me not ! I should have died
 But you have made me weep !
Oh ! heed not the wild words I said,
But leave your soft hand on my head
 And bless me ere I sleep.’

There is a softer happier gleam
Within the blue eyes, and they beam
 In spite of all their sadness.
Two lovely heads in prayer are bent,
One innocent, one penitent,
 And angels weep for gladness.

A FRAGMENT.

AFTER the storm the sunshine, so they sing ;
But ah ! some storms there are, so long, so
fierce,

That ere their rage has spent itself in tears
The sun of happiness goes down, and night,
Dark endless night succeeds them, or at best,
Fitfully lighted by the feeble moon
Of resignation, with her borrowed ray,
Reflected from a gladness not her own.

THE SONG OF TIME.

WISER than the wisest sages !
 Father of the countless ages,
 Yet still in thy prime ;
 Oldest of the things created,
 Yet still with vigour unabated,
 Time ! old Time !

Striding on from day to morrow,
 Full knee-deep in human sorrow,
 Stained with human crime !
 Dragging all the world behind thee,
 Bursting chains that fain would bind thee,
 Time ! stern Time !

Trampling on the earth's delusions,
 Scattering the bright illusions
 Of life's young prime ;
 Parting hands that should not sever,
 Hearts that would beat true for ever,
 Time ! hard Time !

Healer of the woes thou bringest,
Soother of the hearts thou wringest,
Lulling sorrow's fretfulness
To a sweet forgetfulness,
Time ! strong Time !

'Neath the fanning of thy wings,
Wrapt in dreamless slumberings,
Care and anguish sleep at last
On the bosom of the past.
Time ! kind Time !

Yet Death shall slay thee ere he die !
Thy dying ears shall hear the cry
That ushers in eternity !
And Heaven's long triumphant hymn
Shall be the funeral requiem
Of Time ! dead Time !

SONG.

S the stream takes the reflection
Of the bright blue skies above her,
So my darling sheds affection
Back on all the hearts that love her.

As through the transparent water
I can count the shells that lie,
So I know her inmost nature
Through her clear sincerity.

As I read the coming weather,
Gazing on the evening skies,
So I read her wishes ever
Gazing in her truthful eyes.

For she is my light, and fairer,
Fairer than the light to see ;
She is as my life, and nearer,
Nearer than my life to me !

THE OLD SONG.

THE same old song, the same old vow,
 Often repeated, often broken ;
 The same old promise, old enow,
 But still believed in when 't is spoken.

The same old hopes, the same old fears,
 The breaking (never broken) heart ;
 The same forgetfulness, when years
 Have healed the wound, allayed the smart.

Oh ! little maiden, list no longer
 To words you love to hear him speak,
 He is your first, your love is stronger,
 You are his third, his love's more weak !

He will not willingly deceive you,
 He is deceiving himself more,
 But when his time has come to leave you,
 He'll do—as he has done before !

Strange ! that how oft soe'er we sing it,
That same old song, and warn, and preach,
Experience alone can bring it,
It must be learned anew by each !

AD MISERICORDIAM.

H ! cruel, come not to me in my dreams !
 Or coming, let me see thee as thou art ;
 For ever, as I sleep, thy beauty seems
 The faithful mirror of a faithful heart.

And every morn I have to learn again
 The bitter memory of thine untruth,
 And steel my heart anew to bear the pain
 That crushes all the purpose of my youth.

In sleep I hear the laughter that I loved
 Before I knew it false, I see the light
 Of eyes that used to follow where I moved ;
 Ah ! haunt me not ! or show thyself less bright.

Ah ! come not thus ! though golden sunlights move
 Around thee, dark as midnight is thy heart !
 Awake, I pity thee, asleep, I love,
 And it is sin to love thee as thou art.

LIFE AND DEATH.

SLEPT, and some one took me by the hand,
 And led me to a garden ; far away
 We heard a distant moaning of the sea.
 Where first we entered everything was spring,
 From every bush a thousand tiny buds
 Were peeping, and a golden-headed band
 Of children, with the sunlight on their hair,
 Were singing ; and I listened as they sang,
 And chased each other or the butterflies
 That hovered o'er the flowers ; the morning air
 Wafted the happy burthen of their song :

' Golden days that die not,
 Golden hopes that fly not,
 Ye are ours !
 Who can be repining
 While the sun is shining
 On the flowers ?

We are glad, and why not ?
For the winds they sigh not,
But are glad ;
Life is such a pleasure,
That we have no leisure
To be sad !'

Then some one took me by the hand again,
And led me on reluctant. As I went
The sun struck hotter, and the fainting flowers
Began to spread their petals to the air.
I saw a busy crowd of men. I heard
Their anxious whispers. Here and there they went.
Each, all, intent on something, what I knew not.
For one was bending o'er the ground with eyes
That wore an eager disappointed gleam.
Another, with a laugh upon his lips,
Was plucking flowers that withered in his hand.
A third was speaking of I knew not what,
And held a gaping crowd of listeners round.
And some were fighting for I knew not what,
And these were many, and I hid my sight,
For one by one I seemed to recognise
Among the eager and the careless crowd,

The faces of the children I had left
Behind me in the garden of the morn ;
The golden sheen had vanished from their hair,
And all the happy laughter from their eyes,
Their song had grown a strange discordant hum.
That as I listened shaped itself to words :

‘Life is short and all the dearer,
And the sea is sounding nearer
Than of old.
We have little time for saving,
Only one thing is worth having,
Only gold.’

So sang the anxious gazers on the ground,
Jostling each other in their greedy haste.
Then he that plucked the withering flowers sang :

‘Life is short ? so much the dearer !
Hark ! the sea is sounding nearer
Than of yore.
They are fools who hoard up treasure ;
We are wise who live for pleasure,
Nothing more.’

And then I turned me to the voice of him
Who held the gaping crowd ; he spoke of fame :

‘ Life is short, the world is raving,
Only honour is worth having ;
It were shame
Thus to perish without glory,
Thus to die without a story
Or a name.’

He ceased, and some one cried, ‘ Aye, were it shame.’
And at the word the crowd dissolved, and part
Flew off to join the fighters, others went
To jostle with the money-hunting crew,
A few, still gaping at the orator,
Remained and listened ; here I turned away
And would have passed on, but my hand was held.
I paused, and mingled with the hum of men
I seemed to hear the whisper of a song
Fitful and undefined, but strangely sweet ;
And as I listened, painfully at first,
The slender long-drawn thread of sound became
A perfect, seamless web of harmony,

The trembling spark of song rose to a flame
That kindled into anthems, and they sang :

‘ Life is short and time is fleeting ;
Hark ! how near the sea is beating
On the shore.
Here is heat and toil and sadness,
There, oh ! there is rest and gladness
Evermore.

Father ! through the din of life,
Through the tumult and the strife,
Hear, oh hear !
Through life’s turmoil, earth’s commotion,
Even to the shore of ocean,
Be Thou near !’

I heard, but could not see, none seemed to see
And few to hear, the singers ; in the throng
They moved unheeded, and I turned away
And followed him who led me by the hand.

* * * *

An angry sun dipped in a yellow sea,
And ragged heaps of cloud, like shot-torn walls,

Clustered around and grew into the sky
A painted ruin, and a few dead leaves
Fell from the shivering trees and left them bare.
And on a sudden all the shore grew dark,
Save where a snowy line of hissing foam
Showed how the cruel sea came on amain.
Once, when the lightning tore the frowning sky,
And woke the darkness into flickering blue,
I saw, or thought I saw, a huddled crowd
Who knelt and raised their supplicating hands
In agony of terror or of prayer,
And then the thunder followed, and I woke.

Where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door
To pay shortcomings evermore.

A Vision of Poets.



ST. DOROTHEA.



HE sun blazed fiercely out of cloudless blue,
And the deep sea flung back the glare again
As though there were indeed another sun
Within the mimic sky reflected there ;
Not steadily and straight as from above,
But all athwart the little rippling waves
The broken daybeams sparkling leapt aloft
In glittering ruin ; scarce a breath of air
To stir the waters or to wave the trees ;
The flowers hung drooping and the leaves lay close
Against their branches as if sick and faint
With the dull heat, and needing strong support.
The city walls, the stones of every street,
The houses glowed, you would have thought that none
Would venture forth, till that the gracious night
Should come with sable robe and wrap the earth
In softest folds, and shade men from the day.

But see, from every street the seething crowd
Pour out, and all along the way they stand,
And ribald song and jest resounds aloud,
And light accost and careless revelry ;
What means this ? wherefore flock the people forth ?
Ceases the hum, a sudden silence falls
On all around ; the tramp of armèd men
Rings through the air ; and hark ! what further sound !
A girl's fresh voice, a sad sweet song is heard
Above the clank of arms, men hold their breath.
Yet not all sadness is that wondrous chant,
That hushes the wild crowd with sudden awe ;
As when the nightingale's mellifluous tones
Rise in the woodland, ere the other birds
Have ceased their vesper hymn, that moment drops
Each fluttering songster's wild thanksgiving lay,
So for awhile did silence fall on all
Within the seething crowd at that sweet voice.
She comes ; they bring her forth to die, for she
This day must win the martyr's palm, this day
Must witness for her faith, this day must reap
The fruit of all her pains, long rest in heaven.
Long had they spared her, for the governor
Was loth that she should suffer, and her race

Was noble, so they hoped to make her yield,
And waited still and waited; but at length
They grew enraged at her calm steadfastness,
They knew not whence a resolution such
As made a young maid baffle aged men;
So she must die.

Now as she went along
Midst all her guards, again burst forth the mob
Into such bitter taunts, such foul wild words
As sent the hot blood mantling to her cheek
For shame that she, a maid, must hear such things ;
And yet was no remorse within their hearts,
No light of pity in their savage eyes,
Like hungry wolves that scent the blood from far
They howled with joy, expectant of their prey.
There was one there, he in old days had loved
Her fair young face, but he too now, with scorn
Written in his dark eyes and on his brow
And in the curl of his short lip, stood by ;
It seemed not such a face, that bitter smile,
For he was passing fair, in youth's heyday.
But if contemptuous was his mien, his words
Were worse for her to bear, for he cried out,
He, whom her heart yet owned its only love ;

He, whom she held first of all living men ;
He, whom she honoured yet, though left by him
In her distress and danger—this man cried,
‘ Ho, Dorothea ! doth the bridegroom wait ?
And goest thou to his arms ? joy go with thee !
But yet when in his palace courts above
Whereof thou tellest, fair one, think on us
Who toil in this sad world below, on me
Think thou before all others, thine old love,
And send me somewhat for a token ; send
Of that same heavenly fruit and of those flowers
That fade not ! ’

Then she turned and answered him,
‘ As thou hast said, so be it ; thy request
Is granted ! ’ and she passed on to her death.
She died ; her soul was rapt into the skies ;
The vulgar horde who watched her torture knew
Nought of the great unfathomable bliss
Which waited her, and when her spirit fled,
None saw the angel bands receive her, none
Heard the long jubilant sweet sound that burst
Through heaven’s high gates, swept from ten thousand
harps
By seraph choirs, for she had died on earth

Only to enter on her life above.
Night fell upon the earth ; the city lay
Slumbering in cool repose, the restless sea,
Weary with dancing all day 'neath the sun,
Was hushed to sleep by the faint whispering breeze
That, wanting force to sport, but rose and fell
With soothing murmur like to pine boughs stirred
By the north wind ; sleep held men's eyelids close.
And he, that youth, slept, aye ! slept peacefully,
Nor recked of the vile insult he had poured
Upon the head of one whom once he swore
To love beyond all others. As he lay
Wrapped in the dreamless slumber of young health,
Sudden a light unearthly clear hath filled
His chamber, and he starts up from his couch
Gazing in troubled wonder, by his side
What sees he ? a young boy he deems him first,
But when had mortal such a calm pure smile
Since our first father lost his purity ?
A radiant angel rather should he be
Who stands all glorious, bearing in his hands
Such fruit and flowers as surely never grew
On this dull earth ; their fragrance filled the air,
And smote the senses of Theophilus,

That a sad yearning rose within his heart,
Such as at times a strain of song will raise,
Or some chance word will bring (we know not why),
Flooding the inmost soul with that strange sense,
Half pain, half pleasure, of some bygone time,
Some far off and forgotten happiness,
We know not where nor what.

The stranger spoke,

And thus he said, 'Rise up, Theophilus !
And take these gifts which I from heaven bring.
Fair Dorothea, mindful of her words,
Hath sent thee these, and bids thee that henceforth
Thou scoff not but believe !'

With those same words

Vanished the cherub, and the room was dark,
Save where the moonbeams made uncertain light
And where remained those blossoms and that fruit,
For from each leaf and stem there streamed a ray
As of the morning.

Down upon his couch

Theophilus sank prone, with awe oppressed,
But for a moment ; starting wildly up,
He cried, 'My love ! my Dorothea, list !
If thou canst hear me in those starry halls

Where now thou dwellest, I accept thy gift,
Do thou take mine, for I do give myself
Up to the service of thy Lord ; thy faith
Shall from this hour be mine, for I believe !'

FORSAKEN.

THE moments are fleeting, fleeting,
Like leaves in the autumn wind,
Swift as my heart's wild beating,
Yet thou art still unkind !
I watch, but thou drawest not nigh me,
Ah ! cruel as thou art fair !
Laughing the stream runs by me,
And mocks at my soul's despair !


My heart is breaking, breaking,
Alas, love, why must I die ?
A bitter revenge thou art taking
That I wearied thine ear with my sigh !
Yet kill me not, sweet, with sorrow,
Waft me but one soft kiss
And the sun that shall rise to-morrow
Shall see me lie slain with bliss !

SONNET.



ON heaven's steps of beryl, poised for flight,
 An angel stood ; but ere his wings he spread
 Close to his side did his twin angel light
 Who from the darkening earth had newly sped ;
 Thy guardian spirit, seeing that thy head
 Was bent in prayer, so knew thee safe from harm
 Homesick to heaven awhile he quickly fled,
 Longing for native peace and love and calm.
 So spake each angel of his human charge,
 Telling of hopes and fears, of joy and woe,
 Then parting, he who left the shining marge
 To watch o'er me, his care, swift sped below.
 And as I slept, he in my sleeping ear
 Whispered of thee, and straight I dreamt thee near.

TENDER AND TRUE.


 EBECK'S gay tinkle, sweet complaint of
 flutes,
 And silver shower of water-sounding tones
 Pressed from the outstretched cords by harper hands,
 All night made music in the grim old hall.
 Nor these alone, for ladies' voices sweet,
 So sweet the mellow flutes seemed harsh as daws,
 And laughter clear and low, more musical,
 More liquid than the sound of harp or lute,
 Rippled against the roof and round the walls.
 Gloomy and stern the monastery stood
 In fair St. Johnstoun, and the friars black
 Were known as kindly open-handed men
 Who freely gave to whosoever lacked,
 Having large revenues and larger hearts.
 Now sounds of wassail and of merriment
 Scared the staid echoes of the ancient pile,

King James of Stewart's line held court therein.
Loud was the revel through the evening hours,
At length the feast was done ; the monarch stood
The only man within the convent hall,
Beside him fair Joanna, while around
Her maidens bloomed, high-born and comely all ;
All fair, but one as far excelled the rest
As the queen rose outshines the simple buds,
Her beauty made their loveliness seem naught.
Go ! bind with other flowers the heliotrope
And straight they wither ; simple shows the bloom,
Innocent, starlike, yet 'tis murderous,
Nor brooks a rival's presence, so they die.
Thus Catherine's beauty claimed preeminence,
O'erruled and slew the charms of all her mates
As sunlight quenches tapers' feeble gleam.
Long were the task, and all too weak are words
And powerless to paint the smiling face
That looked from out a frame of curls that shone
Like chesnuts tangled in a mesh of gold ;
The lustre of the ever-laughing eyes
Which from the wild forget-me-not had stolen
Hue, dewy brilliancy and attributes :
A lovely gleeful face, yet in the brow

And in the lines about the delicate mouth
Might you descry a strength, a hidden power
Unknown to all, it might be to herself,
That spoke a woman who, if cause there were,
Could rise to deeds of might, could do and die
As fitted one who came of Douglas' line.
The king, the fated king, he stands and jests,
While, snowy hands upon his shoulder clasped,
Joanna gazes upwards in his face
And laughs, because he laughs, her lord and love.
Secure they deemed themselves, when from below
There rose a murmuring sound, a vengeful shout,
A clash of weapons, and the oriel
Flashed from its darkness into ruddy light
As tossed the torches in the abbey court.
As startled deer when first the thunder rolls
Crowd all together, so they huddled there
In breathless listening terror round the king,
The maidens all waiting they knew not what.
Far off they heard the city tocsin clash,
But nearer, ever nearer, came the cry,
Then first the queen found words, and sobbing spoke,
'They seek thy life, mine own, they seek thy life !
I hear the shout of " Athole " at the gates,

And "Grahame" too ! and here are none to aid !
We are but women, what can women do ?
Shelter thee in our arms a little while,
Then die beside thee !'

Out spoke Catherine ;

The fire was in her eyes, the Douglas blood
Was flushing in her cheek, and thus she said :
'Though we be women, yet these knaves shall learn,
So great a power hath truth o'er falsity
That even a woman, let her but be true,
Can foil the greatest lord who e'er wore graith
If a false heart be hidden in his breast.
Rouse thee, my liege ! arise for Scotland's sake !
For the queen's sake ! and hear : beneath this hall
Yawns a dark vault ; full well I know the place,
For sporting yesterday we raised the trap
And saw the hollow blackness spread beneath ;
Through one low arch alone came any light,
And with the light came laughter, merry cries
And sound of bounding balls—the tennis court !
The tennis court ! it opens to the town,
St. Johnstoun's burghers all are loyal folk.
Go down, I prithee, sire, and thus escape !'
Uprose the plank drawn up by lily hands,

With dumb blank horror stricken stood the king ;
Then as they drew him forward to the hole,
Cold struck the damp air upwards in his face
As though he stooped above an open grave.
Still, as he wavered, Catherine urgently
Cried, ‘ Go, my liege ! oh ! madam, bid him go ! ’
Yet did he linger. Then Joanna came ;
Pressing his hand against her hueless lips,
She prayed him for the love of her, his wife,
For love of all his children, he would go,
So that he yielded. Loth was he to part ;
The coward dread for self that shamed him first
Had left his heart, and now for her he feared,
Her and her maidens ; still she pressed him sore,
Until he thought, ‘ They seek my life, not hers ; ’
Then with one agonising last embrace
Stepped to the vault, and dropped, and Catherine
cried,
‘ They come ! quick, quick ! the plank ! I bar the
door.’
A moment listening by the door she stood,
Then stooped and groped around, and rose again
With a sick misery in her blue eyes,
And haggard lines upon her working face,

Muttering, 'The bar is gone, and all is lost !'
Bewildered, terrified, she only thought
Of safety for the king, and not to shock
The other weaker women with the news,
So stood irresolute ; and up the stair
Tramped loud the sound of arms and weapon clash,
While ever whooped the Grahame 'midst the din,
Hounding his bandogs on the royal hart.
On Catherine's face there came a sterner look,
A wild smile faintly flickered o'er her lips,
High thoughts and worthy of a noble soul
Were rising in her heart ; she bared her arm,
Her round right arm, her soft blue-veinèd arm,
And thrust it through the staples of the door.
Joanna and her maidens saw her there,
But they with terror dazed, or marked her not,
Or looking through the dim hall only saw
Catherine listening still beside the door.
A momentary hush without, a pause
As if the traitors having reached the goal
Drew back from finishing their coward work,
Fearing the ghastly end now fully seen.
Oh ! the cold shiver that then shook their hearts
Who crouched against the fireplace of the hall,

So being farthest from the leaguered door ;
Oh ! the dumb agony, the high intent,
The courage, and the natural woman's dread
That strove for mastery of her heaving breast,
Who stood unflinching with her slender arm
Thrust through the iron staples of the door.
There came a yell, a rush of many feet,
A sound of bursting wood, one stifled wail ;
In swarmed the foe ; some saw an awful face,
Rigid and beautiful, and crossed themselves,
For fateful seemed the wide and glittering eyes,
The stricken horror of the stony gaze ;
Those who looked twice saw it was but a girl
Wrapped closely in her cloak who fronted them,
No spirit, only an affrighted girl.
She sate her down upon the chamber floor,
And crouched there, closely wrapped within her cloak,
Hiding the ghastly thing was late her arm ;
She watched in pride exulting as they searched,
And as the baffled faces met her view,
Scornfully laughed a laugh was half a shriek ;
Yet still to watch the upshot she endured.
The many feet tramped down the creaking stair
Unwillingly, the maidens raised their heads,

Looking around and whispering, ' We are safe !'
Catherine heard and moaned, ' I will not die
Till they are gone, until the king is safe,
Until they tell me he is safe indeed !'
Enduring thus she listened, till a shout
Rang through the outer hall, the foe returned.
The wretched queen sat cowering on the plank,
They dragged her from the spot, they burst the trap
And leapt into the vault ; a clash of swords
Was heard below, the stag had turned to bay,
The hounds fell fast before him for a while.
Think how she listened who had given her life
To save her king, fearing it given in vain ;
She had drawn near, and hung above the pit
Hearing the clamour, till a silence fell,
And issuing forth the Grahame came at last.
She looked into his face, no need had she
To ask the end, at last her strength was gone
And she fell down with one long gasping cry ;
When as her mantle dropped they saw the truth,
The truth that blanched his cheek who never flinched
Nor knew remorse or pity when his king
Clung to his knees, half-dead, imploring life ;
For even he could not but pity her

Who gave her youth and beauty to the grave,
Who held as nothing all her agony
Beside the end she hoped for, and in vain.
Now slumbers Catherine, her trouble past ;
Death like a tender nurse hath stilled her cries
And hushed her to her rest ; but though she sleep,
Her memory wakes, and sometimes speaks awhile
From the far ages, telling of the days
When women were as brave as beautiful,
And truth and loyalty had still the might
That fired a woman's heart to such a deed.

TO THE FAIR INCONSTANT.

DREAMEST thou that I mourn the days gone
by?
When I believed thee, happy ignorant days!
Nay, than mine eyes thy heart is scarce more dry!
Although within my breast a fire doth blaze,
A funeral flame, and I half wondering gaze
As hope and joy therein die silently.
Why should I blame thee, whom the world will praise?
Smiles (all thou hadst to give) I had of thee,
Having nor love nor truth, thou couldst not give them
me!

THE SWALLOW'S FAREWELL.

HERE lies a gold crown
 On the blue mountain's crest,
 Which the sun hath cast down
 Ere he sinks to his rest,
 With wail broken-hearted
 The sad wind is sighing
 For summer departed
 And flowers that lie dying.

Bathed in a golden gleam,
 Lit by the sun's last beam,
 To glitter the roof-tops seem
 In the dying glow ;
 And blazes the tall church spire
 Like a tongue of living fire,
 Where the grey tower raises its head
 And watches above the dead
 Who sleep below.

Round and round the hamlet,
Round the old church tower,
There flits a single swallow
In the quiet twilight hour ;
And where the baron's castle stands
Lording it over the outspread lands,
An image of feudal power,
You may see that single swallow go
Fluttering high and fluttering low
In the quiet twilight hour.
For the summer has gone to a distant land
And the little blue swallows, a goodly band,
With morning light will leave the strand
And follow the sun and the flower.

But this one swallow only
Has stolen himself away,
And flies all sad and lonely
In the close of the autumn day.
He twitters and talks as he hovers and flies
Under the glorious evening skies,
As hither and thither he quickly hies.

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(The Swallow)

On flickering wing I hurry and fly,
For soon will the sun sink down and die,
And I ere the night must revisit each spot
I loved in the days that are long gone by.
So down to the bright green meadows that lie
Stretched out by the river, I quickly hie,
And I tarry not.

For I grow old and weary,
And when I shall leave this clime
To the winter cold and dreary,
And follow the summer time,
I shall never come back again, never again !
My bright blue feathers are flecked with grey
Like the sky at the close of an April day,
When the sun and the wind have beaten the rain
And the clouds are floating away.

I am growing very weary and old,
And when the sun comes back with the May
To wake the flowers and kill the cold,
I shall lie dead, far far away !
So I must see them all once more,
The places I loved in the days of yore.

I swoop o'er the fields by the river
Where oft I hunted the fly,
When the sun made the hot air quiver,
And the trout were fain to lie
Under the weeds in each deep pool
Where the dark water was still and cool.

But I cared not
Though the sun were hot,
I came with the rush of an archer's shot !
And the gnats screamed shrill,
And the mayflies fled !
But the skies are chill
And they all are dead !

Oh ! sweet green fields, as ye lie by the river
Where ever the tremulous aspens quiver
As spirits were passing near,
No more shall I see you ! the summer will bring
The flies to sport o'er the streamlet's spring,
But I shall never with fluttering wing
Sweep o'er you in sunlight clear !

I am passing on to the hamlet now.
Laughter and song I hear below
And sounds of revelry catch,

Beneath the old grey cottages all,
The blue smoke wreaths that rise and fall
Over the mossgrown thatch.

Children beneath me are sporting there,
Their voices rise clear in the evening air,

Pipe and tabor merrily sound,

Merrily swings the dance around ;

And I must leave them, I may not stay !

Will they miss the swallow so old and grey ?

Farewell, farewell to ye, children dear !

I bless you from sorrow, from pain, from fear !

For none of your band

Would raise a hand

To aim at me as I floated near ;

But, ' Martins and swallows

Are God's best scholars,'

Ye sang with your voices sweet and clear !

The churchyard lies beneath,

The trees rock to and fro,

As though they mourned for those whom death

Hath laid in the cold earth low.

A mournful place, yet I love it too,

I know that so many I loved and knew

Are lying beneath the flowers and the dew.

Oh, church ! I pray thee, watch them well,
My friends thou guardest there ;
Let no bad spirit, no elfin fell
To trouble their slumbers dare !
Toll with thy holy, thy solemn bell
And keep whom I leave in thy care !

Now up to the castle old
I wing my flight.
The air grows damp and cold,
Fast falls the night ;
Fain I my wings would fold
In slumber light.

Once more, once more, by my own dear nest !
Though smallest of any I love it the best,
As it hangs in the nook of the castle wall
Just where the earliest sunbeams fall.
Sweetly we dwelt there, my mate and I,
But long, long ago I saw her die.
And all my children away have flown,
They loved me when little, but now they are grown,
And the old grey swallow is all alone !

Not quite alone ; my nest
Hangs over a lattice high ;
There lives a maiden the fairest and best
Of any beneath the sky.

Her hair like the raven's wing is black,
And her eyes are the hue of the kingfisher's back !
Oft would she sit with her dark blue eye
Swimming in tears, though none knew why ;
But the poor little swallow knew the thought
That sorrowful clouds to her bright face brought,

For I could flit

Where I saw her sit

After the little white dove had lit :

She kissed the letter, she kissed the dove !

And at night I looked out from my nest above,

I saw her stand at her window and weep

When other mortals were wrapped in sleep,

And she and I were alone with the stars

As she spread her white arms through the window
bars

And murmured, ' Alas ! my love, my love ! '

I charge thee, old grey tower !

That thou guard the maiden well,

I bless her from evil power,

I bless her from baneful spell !

The sun has gone down, dark grows the sky,

Mournfully comes the low wind's sigh.

I am going, going, the night draws nigh.

Sweet maiden, farewell, farewell !

* * * * *

The sun has risen dull and red

Over the misty land,

And away to a distant strand

The swallows all have fled, have fled !

All ? not all ; at the break of day,

Dead and cold in his nest there lay

One old swallow, old and grey !

POST TENEBRAS LUX.

‘For these my poor rhymes, if they be nought, burn them; if any worth, accept them; if impertinent, forgive them, and lay the fault to too much and misguided love. They must needs seem poor after those you first received in your trouble, but if scanty in word they are rich in meaning and intention. And it seems to me you want the sympathy of the brethren more now than then.’



WAKE from out thy dreams, and quit the cave
 Wherein dull melancholy holds thee bound;
 Come forth, and raise thine eyes from off the
 ground,
 And gaze upon the heavens, and be brave!

‘Am I not brave?’ thou say’st; ‘I make no moan!
The world knows not my sorrow, for I smile
Although my heart is breaking all the while!
Then chide me not, friend, if I mourn alone!’

Aye! well dost thou conceal thy cruel wrong!
And well I know how bitter is the task
(Since I may see thy face without the mask),
But I against myself would have thee strong.

I say not, ‘Cease to mourn;’ thou needs must weep;
But let not sorrow rule thy life too long,
And let not earthborn sobs impede thy song.
Let peace return, and bid thy trouble sleep!

‘When first the tempest roared, there was some light,
Though but the lightning gave its lurid gleam;
But not one ray now cheers me with its beam,
And ever dark and darker grows the night!’

Knowest thou not that ever ere the dawn
The blackness thickens, nature seems to die,
Yet men fear not; they know the darkening sky
Foretells the speedy coming of the morn.

And silence rules o'er all with awful sway,
For earth intently listening doth lie
To catch far off beyond the eastern sky
The first faint footfall of the coming day.

Look up, oh friend! the night is well nigh past!
The sun shall rise, the darkness pass away.
Go boldly forth to face the coming day,
And peace and joy shall light thy soul at last!

THE SEASONS OF LIFE.

WHEN violets scent the woodland ways
 And kingcups gild the meadow grass,
 When thorns with blossom are all a-blaze
 And sweeten the winds that through them pass,
 Merrily singing we pass the days,
 Fill the woods with our joyous lays :
 ‘ Wreathe the flowers,
 Build us bowers,
 Long and sweet is this life of ours ! ’

When gorse has fired the barren hill,
 And roses blush at the kiss o’ the sun,
 And minnows sport in the shallowing rill,
 And vines are ripening, every one,
 Not so sweet, so clear is our song,
 Yet we chorus it loud and long :
 ‘ Garlands twine,
 Drain the wine,
 Joy is for ever and life divine ! ’

When rustling leaves that once were green
 Sad burdens whisper 'neath our feet ;
When never a bird or flower is seen,
 And wild winds at the casement beat,
Our voices have gotten a mournful tone,
Our singing is turned to sob and moan :
 ' Joy is dead,
 Hope has fled,
Graves have rest for the weary head !'

When naked trees, through mist that shrouds
 Their shivering outstretched arms, do grope,
When light scarce pierces murky clouds,
 And life seems vanished past all hope,
Peacefully waiting then we lie,
For endless pleasure and youth draw nigh.
 Church bells toll,
 ' Rest to the soul
That reaches at length the wished-for goal !'

LILIAN IN THE FOREST.

PART I.

MORNING.



UST where the daylight pierces through the
trees,

Where to a twilight shade
The leafy darkness softens by degrees,
There lies a sunlit glade
In the forest green.

A tiny lawn shut in by circling boughs
Save only from above,
A fitting spot for lovers' secret vows ;
'The place seems made for love,
So fair the scene.

'Mid grass and flowers a sparkling pool there lies
Wherein the cowslips peep
To view their beauty, o'er it summer flies
In mazy circle sweep
The livelong day.

A hawthorn thicket blooming sweet and white,
Beeches, a willow hoar,
Shut in the glade from vulgar curious sight
And guard the grassy floor
With blossom gay.

Sweet little Lilian sits beside the pool,
The keeper's darling child,
Laving her small feet in the water cool,
Weaving the flow'rets wild
In a rustic crown.

Bluebell and daffodil she deftly weaves,
Tying the stems beneath
Upon a supple bough with sharp green leaves ;
Now, finished, rests her wreath
On her ringlets brown.

What leaves are these to mingle with spring flowers

Upon a youthful brow ?

Ah ! sad presage of weary future hours !

She wears a willow bough

Even in childhood !

But what recks she of woe ; the sun has shed

Light on her curling hair,

That mingles with the buds upon her head ;

She knoweth nought of care

There in the wildwood.

She hath no playmates, yet she wants for none ;

She knows the shy wild deer,

The brown hares stop and gaze, the birds each one

Hop round and have no fear,

As she sits alone.

Crooning a little song, with folded hands

As she leans against the tree,

The willow tree beside the pool that stands,

Full softly singeth she

In a half-hushed tone.

Innocent Lilian sits and nothing fears
 With willow in her wreath ;
She scarcely knows the name of grief or tears,
 Of parting, sin or death,
 What should she fear ?

Watching the blue sky, where the branches break,
 Wherein one downy cloud
Floats like a wild white swan upon a lake,
 Majestic, silent, proud,
 In the morning clear.

She thinks, 'This world is very gay and bright,
 The sunlight and the flowers ;
If there were but no winter and no night
 In this sweet world of ours,
 'Twould be blither so !

Though there are sorrows very hard to bear—
 Did not my kitten die ?
And mother says there won't be cats up there
 In heaven beyond the sky,
 Kittens don't go !'

A flushing cheek, a lip half pouting out,
Eyes that are filling fast ;
The shower is coming, when she turns about,
For something soft brushed past,
Her own brown fawn.

Its cold nose thrust into her tiny hand,
Forgotten is her woe ;
She kisses it, it seems to understand,
And side by side they go
Across the lawn.

Between the beeches, by the thorns they run,
Now seen, now lost to sight ;
The cloud has floated over, and the sun
Mounts to his noontide height.
Lilian is gone.

PART II.

AFTERNOON.

In the stilly forest glade
The drowsy light is blinking,
And welcome seems the shade
From glaring sunlight shrinking ;
The afternoontide glare
When the sun puts forth his might
As revellers' torches flare
Before they sink in night.

Glassed in the peaceful water
Are bush and tree and sky,
And she, the keeper's daughter,
Who blushing stands thereby ;
Blushing by turns and paleing
At the passionate words she hears,
Till, love o'er fear prevailing,
She sinks in his arms in tears.

Pressed to his heart he holds her,
And she sobs upon his breast
As he tells her his arms enfold her,
That there she shall find her rest ;
Whispering in her ear
Of future love and leisure,
She stays her sobs to hear
In a dreamy troubled pleasure.

The blush begins to fade,
A smile steals o'er her face ;
Ah ! rosy brown-haired maid,
Trust not those arms' embrace !
' Oh, be of better cheer !
And banish vain alarms.
What should my Lilian fear
In her own true love's arms ?'

With a shiver she starts away,
' Your love I may dearly rue,
You may weary of me some day,
I fear for your truth, Sir Hugh !
And I fear for my ownself too,
Women are weak as water,

And I know that you are Sir Hugh,
And I—am the keeper's daughter !'

He clasps her closer yet
With a sad reproachful gaze,
' Think you I can forget
The bliss of these summer days ?
Am I a thing so slight
As to leave whom once I woo ?
The years may take their flight,
But never will I from you !'

Softly he pleads and low,
Pleasantly chimes his voice,
It rings the knell of woe,
And bids her heart rejoice.
Oh ! readily she believes,
Determined on believing ;
His tale her ear deceives,
His own wild heart deceiving.

For he holds himself as true
As ever was ancient knight,

Never was lover knew
Less of the ruthless might
Of the quiet seeming stream
That swiftly bears them on
Who never of danger dream
Till hope of safety's gone.

There is none to bid them stay,
To speak of the sad to-morrow ;
They live but for to-day,
When past seems all their sorrow.
For a veil is o'er their sight,
By love and fancy woven,
Shall make the dark seem bright
Till it be rudely cloven.

His strong arm holds her fast,
They saunter through the trees ;
The sky grows overcast,
And moans the rising breeze.
The beeches bend and sway
As the lovers pass from sight,
Slowly draws on the day
To a wild and stormy night.

PART III.

NIGHT.

Wild is the night.
The owl flies whooping between the trees,
As they shudder and bend to the fitful breeze
In the dim half-light.

The rain is past ;
The withered leaves that lie on the ground
Rustle and move with a whispering sound,
Stirred by the blast.

Half dark, half light,
For the angry clouds the moon that cover
Are torn by the storm and are hurrying over.
They hide her from sight.

Now floats the rack,
And seared and wan is her face as she peeps
Where paler seems her image that sleeps
In the waters black.

Where the willow stands,
With mossy trunk and boughs all stark,
As praying in agony, there in the dark
With outstretched hands.

There crouches low
Upon the bank a woman alone,
And now with a song and now with a moan
Rocks to and fro.

Alone i' the night:
Damp and torn is the long brown hair,
Withered the cheek was once so fair,
But her eyes are bright,

Bright and dry.
She sobs and moans, but never a tear
May ease her heart ; now wild and clear
Her song swells high.

‘The night is as wild as a drunkard’s dream,
Loud roars the torrent, the wind raves high ;
The torrent, in summer a tinkling stream,

The wind, in summer a half-hushed sigh,
Now each to outroar the other they try !

False lover, false lover !

Thine eyes were bright !

But the sods they now cover

Thy beauty from sight !

How couldst thou deceive me ?

Why did I believe thee ?

Loud roars the wind in the winter's night.

Noble knight and haughty maiden !

Little did ye think the air

Breathed across the pool was laden

With the curses of despair !

Crouching lowly in the bracken,

There I heard him pour his vows

In her ear, where I, forsaken,

Once had listened 'neath the boughs !

And they stood beneath the beech

Where he wooed me for his bride,

Where he witched me with his speech,

Where I slew my maiden pride !

See where the cloud floats over the moon,

The song sinks down to a mournful croon.

‘What hast thou done with thy flowers, little pond ?
What hast thou done with thy flowers ?
Thou art like me, for I was too fond
And wasted my blossom in summer hours !

Now my soul is dark and wild,
Dark as thy still water !
Dost thou remember me ? I was a child,
I was the keeper’s daughter.
I played by thy brink, where now I must sink !
I was fair and—nay ! but I must not think !’

The moon steals forth from the muffling cloud
The maniac’s chant is wild and loud.

‘My knife was sharp, my arm was strong,
My love had sworn that he would be true !
My arm was nerved by my cruel wrong !
Why didst thou meet me alone, Sir Hugh ?

Who shed bitterer tears than I ?
Wept for my lover I thought so true ;
Little they thought how I saw him die !
Why didst thou meet me alone, Sir Hugh ?

Lady Grace with her raven hair
Wept awhile; but her tears she dried
When the baron made her his lady fair.
I have wept ever since he died!

I have wept ever, and I shall weep;
Ah! I never shall see him, never!
Though mine eyes be closed in sleep,
Still I must weep, and weep for ever!

Yesterday when she passed me by;
Oh! but I cursed her, and she turned white!
“Only mad Lilian!” the neighbours cry;
She pitying stared, and passed me by.
Yet mad Lilian’s curse shall light!

Hide thy face, O wandering moon!
Thou mindest me of the eyes of my lover!
I shall go from the forest soon,
But first thy sorrowful face, O moon!
The veil of clouds must cover.

Aha! pale moon, thou ridest, ridest
Over the blue and under the rack,

Thou wilt flout me no more as bright thou glidest,
For I shall be gone when thou comest back !
How thou wilt peer through the clouds in fear !
Quick ! let me go, she will soon be here !'

A wild loud laugh through the darkness rings ;
A plunge—she is silent, no more she sings.

The moon peers out again ; her light she flings
On pool and sward and trees,
She sees where on the water spread the rings,
No living soul she sees.
Lilian is gone.



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